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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5116
INFO RUEHXP/ALL NATO POST COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES IMMEDIATE
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE 0056
RUEHPD/AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA IMMEDIATE 0249
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

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SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE CONTRIBUTION TO UNIFIL

REF: LISBON 01743

Summary:

[¶1.](#) (U) The Portuguese Superior Council on National Defense (CSDN) held an extraordinary session on August 29 and unanimously voted to send an Army Engineering and Construction Company with up to 140 personnel in mid-October to support UNIFIL. During the same meeting, the CSDN also announced the possible reduction of troops in Bosnia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (U) The Superior Council on National Defense, presided by President Cavaco Silva, held an extraordinary session August 29 to decide the composition of Portugal's contribution to UNIFIL. Basing its decision on operational relevancy, risk, and cost, the CSDN unanimously elected to deploy to southern Lebanon an Army Engineering unit rather than a frigate, helicopters, or mechanized Army unit as suggested by press reports. The GOP estimates the mission will cost 9.3 million euros, 70 percent of which would be supported by the United Nations. The DAO confirmed with the Ministry of Defense that the Engineering unit will integrate into UNIFIL's third phase in mid- October to rehabilitate destroyed infrastructure. The Spanish daily El Pas reported on August 31 that the Portuguese will be under Spanish command, but the DAO has not yet been able to confirm this with the Ministry of Defense.

[¶3.](#) (U) During the same meeting, the CSDN announced the possible reduction of troops in Bosnia and the DRC but stated that this was separate from their decision to contribute to UNIFIL. Currently, Portugal has 49 marines in the DRC and two infantry companies in Bosnia. The GOP had already started discussion in May 2006 to downsize their presence in Bosnia by one company. Any troop reductions would occur at the end of the year or the beginning of next year.

[¶4.](#) (U) Comment: Portugal indicated early on that it wanted to contribute to UNIFIL but had been waiting for clarification of the mission mandate (reftel). The August 25 EU Meeting on UNIFIL helped solidify thoughts on what kind of military assistance Portugal could provide. The Portuguese view their selection of an engineering unit as a low- cost, moderate-risk, high-visibility contribution to UNIFIL. This decision reflects Portugal's desire to play a greater role in the Middle East despite limited financial resources. While the decision to reduce troops in Bosnia and the DRC occurred during the same Council meeting, these reductions had been discussed well before the Lebanon crisis.

O'Neal